

27-28 September 2023  
09:00-17:30 / 09:00-15:30  
MINUTES - Agreed on 19 October 2023

**Location:** Chalkidiki, Greece and Webconference

**Attendees:**

o Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton (web), Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe (web), Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

o Hearing Experts<sup>1</sup>:

Not Applicable

o European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

EC: Kris De Smet (web, item 5.2), Regina Eberhart (web, item 6.9), Sandrine Amsler (web, item 9.1)

o EFSA:

Ruben Barcia, Kateryna Chuzhakina, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liebana, Joana Lourenco, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Ancuta Cezara Simon, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck

o Others:

FIP Unit: Cristina Croera

Not Applicable

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>2</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,<sup>3</sup> EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

<sup>1</sup> As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/policy\\_independence.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/competing\\_interest\\_management\\_17.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf)



## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 163<sup>rd</sup> Panel Plenary meeting held on 12-13 July 2023 by webconference

The minutes of the 163<sup>rd</sup> Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 27 July 2023.

## 5. Scientific output(s) submitted for adoption/endorsement

### 5.1 Statement on how to interpret the QPS qualification on 'acquired antimicrobial resistance genes' (EFSA-Q-2023-00096)<sup>4</sup>

Last (6<sup>th</sup>) Working Group (WG) meeting took place on 20 June by web-meeting. The WG finalised the reply to the comments/questions received through the public consultation (PC). Some amendments and improvements were made in the original text of the statement sent for PC. PC Outcome report was finalised and agreed by the WG. It will be published with the Panel Statement. The Panel Statement and the PC report were presented and adopted/endorsed by the BIOHAZ Panel.

### 5.2 Scientific opinion on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in postharvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs – part 1 (EFSA-Q-2021-00374)<sup>5</sup>

The last WG meeting took place on 7 September 2023 in Parma. The WG Chair presented carefully the full Part 1 opinion discussing with Panel members the approach followed to address all comments received from the Panel, the answers to ToRs, recommendations, abstract and summary. The BIOHAZ Panel adopted the Part 1 draft opinion. The next WG meeting will be a web meeting on 5 October 2023.

### 5.3 Scientific report of EFSA on the evaluation of application of the Czech Republic to be recognised as having a negligible risk of classical scrapie (EFSA-Q-2023-00059)<sup>6</sup>

The WG Chair presented the latest version of the scientific report. The draft report and the model had been shared with the Panel in advance. The comments made before the plenary by panel members, mainly editorial, had been addressed in the report in advance. The WG Chair went through the changes made since the last plenary, focusing on the explanation of how the results are produced using the model. One Panel member recommend to explain in more details the sources of the different values of the sensitivity of the diagnostic screening test. It was addressed afterwards in the final report. The scientific report was endorsed by the BIOHAZ Panel.

## 6. Scientific Output submitted for discussion

### 6.1 Scientific opinion on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feeds as notified to EFSA (EFSA-Q-2023-00054)<sup>7</sup>

Last meeting took place on 4 September by web meeting. The WG Chair discussed further proposals for the new challenges/themes to be included in this Opinion. The next WG meeting

<sup>4</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00096>

<sup>5</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00374>

<sup>6</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00059>

<sup>7</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00054?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00054>



will be on 7 November in Parma. The QPS opinion document will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2025.

**6.2 Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 19: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2023 (EFSA-Q-2021-00771)<sup>8</sup>**

Last meeting took place on 4 September by web meeting. Seventy-one notifications were received between April and September 2023 (inclusive): 30 as feed additives, 22 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 7 as novel foods and 12 as PPPs. From these 71, 61 were not evaluated because belong to taxonomic units excluded from the QPS evaluation (26 filamentous fungi, 1 *Enterococcus faecium*, 5 *E. coli* and 1 bacteriophage), and 28 belong to taxonomic units that already have a QPS status. The remaining 10 notifications, corresponding to 9 TUs, were evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Serratia marcescens* (2 notifications), *Weizmannia faecalis*, *Clostridium tyrobutyricum*, *Burkholderia ubonensis*, *Ensifer adhaerens*, *Candida oleophila*, *Pseudomonas putida*, *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. The screening phase of the extensive literature search (ELS) for potential safety concerns related to the QPS list TUs is finalised. The deadline is 30 December 2023.

**6.3 Scientific opinion on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in postharvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs – parts 2-5 (EFSA-Q-2023-00073<sup>9</sup>, EFSA-Q-2023-00074<sup>10</sup>, EFSA-Q-2023-00075<sup>11</sup> and EFSA-Q-2023-00076<sup>12</sup>), including associated outsourcing activities (OC/EFSA/BIOCONTAM/2021/02**

The last WG meeting took place on 7 September 2023 in Parma. A brief update on the progress of the Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 Scientific Opinions was provided at the meeting. The next WG meeting will be a web meeting on 5 October 2023. The WG will then discuss the outline of the next 4 scientific opinions of this mandate (sector specific for fresh-whole, fresh-cut and frozen FVHs and modelling). The WASHTOP consortium is expected to submit their deliverable D4 by 4 October 2023 and the WG will start immediately thereafter reviewing this important prefinal interim report. The deadline for the adoption of the Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 Scientific Opinions is 31 December 2024.

**6.4 Scientific opinion on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments (EFSA-Q-2022-00217)<sup>13</sup>**

No WG meeting was held since last plenary meeting. The draft scientific opinion was shared with the BIOHAZ panel for first reading, apart from section 3.6 (Knowledge gaps and priorities for future research), section 4 (Conclusions), abstract, and summary. The WG Chair went through the different sections of the scientific opinion and discussed specific comments with the BIOHAZ panel. Some comments required discussion with the WG members. The WG chair proposed to use a single uncertainty table for the whole assessment which was agreed. The impact of the uncertainty on the conclusions is not required. The panel commented to avoid repetitions in some of the sections and suggested to present the data dealing with the interventions in tables. The conclusions will be drafted at the next WG meeting on 10-11

<sup>8</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00771?search=EFSA-Q-2021-00771>

<sup>9</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00073?search=EFSA-Q-2021-00771>

<sup>10</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00074?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00074>

<sup>11</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00075?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00075+>

<sup>12</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00076?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00076>

<sup>13</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00217?search=EFSA-Q-2022-00217>



October 2023 in Parma. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023.

**6.5 Scientific opinion on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU (EFSA-Q-2022-00826)<sup>14</sup>**

The last WG meeting was held by web-conference on 17 July 2023. The WG chair gave an overall update of the work ongoing. The section of the draft scientific opinion dealing with SQ1.1 (*Vibrio* spp. of highest public health relevance) was presented for discussion. As species other than *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. vulnificus* and non-O1, non-O139 *V. cholerae* are less frequently found in seafood placed or intended to be placed on the EU market and have been rarely identified as the cause of illness in humans in the EU through seafood consumption, the BIOHAZ panel agreed that the *Vibrio* spp. considered in the current opinion are *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. vulnificus* and non-O1, non-O139 *V. cholerae*. The next WG meeting will be held by web-conference on 13 October 2023. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 June 2024.

**6.6 Scientific report of EFSA on the impact of the proposed revised Australia's microbiological monitoring programme for beef and sheep meat exported to the EU (EFSA-Q-2023-00058)<sup>15</sup>**

The last WG meetings took place on 14 July and on 5 September. EFSA staff and the WG Chair updated the Panel on the progress with the draft scientific report. The WG obtained results with the Australian model and compared with the original results obtained with the mandate. Some differences were noted, therefore an expert from Australia will be invited to the next WG meeting as hearing expert to discuss the results obtained. Meanwhile, the WG is progressing with the development of a new model to assess the impact of the proposed changes to the monitoring system for beef and sheep carcasses exported to the EU. The next WG meeting is scheduled on 12 October 2023. The deadline for this mandate is 31 December 2023.

**6.7 Scientific opinion on a re-evaluation of certain aspects of the EFSA Scientific Opinion of April 2010 on risk assessment of parasites in fishery products, based on new scientific data (EFSA-Q-2023-00090)<sup>16</sup>**

The sixth meeting on the WG took place on 22 September. The Chair of the WG presented the developments done so far for the draft scientific opinion with regards to ToR1: main EU/EFTA aquaculture finfish species, parasites of public health importance, and data on the occurrence of those parasites in the finfish species considered; TOR2: update on the diagnostic/detection methods since 2010, and ToR3: update on the methods/treatments available or under development for the inactivation or removal of those parasites. The seventh WG meeting will be held on 5 October 2023 in EFSA premises. The outputs to address the mandate will be two scientific opinions of the BIOHAZ Panel, one with deadline March 2024 and one with deadline December 2024.

**6.8 Scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins (EFSA-Q-2023-00105)<sup>17</sup>**

The chair of the WG reminded the ToR and presented the work progress since the last plenary. The first meeting of the WG took place in July. Since then there has been a request for

<sup>14</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions?search=EFSA-Q-2022-00826>

<sup>15</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00058?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00058>

<sup>16</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00090?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00090>

<sup>17</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00105>



clarification of the ToR to the EC, focused on the hazards to be considered, the source and type of material to be included in the risk assessment, and some points about the exposure assessment, the risk characterisation and the processing methods included in the legislation. In parallel, the industry has been approached with a list of questions on the production of collagen and gelatine and on industry practices. The extracts of the 2020 EFSA opinion on the same subject were provided to two major industry associations asking to confirm if the citations of industry data and information they provided in 2019 still stand. The second meeting is scheduled for 9-10 October 2023.

#### **6.9 Application alternative method ECN tunnel composting (EFSA-Q-2023-00448)<sup>18</sup>**

The chair of the WG reminded of the new ABP application submitted by the Belgian competent authority on behalf of the European Compost Network (ECN) on New European Transformation Parameters for Composting Animal By-Products in a Tunnel. The BIOHAW unit informed that: a) the dossier was validated on 11 September 2023, and by legal requirement, the opinion should be delivered on 11 March 2024. Since the march plenary in 2024 will take place on 13-14 March 2024, after the deadline for submission of the opinion, EFSA contacted the EC asking if there is any inconvenience in submitting the opinion, if adopted, a few days after the legal deadline, to which the EC accepted; b) the BIOHAZ WG on applications for alternative methods of use or disposal of animal by-products or derived products, still open, has been activated for this application. The WG that produced the previous opinion on the same application in 2020 will be established; c) EFSA offered lot 1 (full package) to the consortium with whom EFSA has signed a framework partnership agreement (FPA) to provide support in the risk assessment of ABP applications. At the time of the plenary, the specific grant agreement for this application had not been signed yet; d) in order to deal with the milestones and legal deadlines, the first meeting of the WG has been scheduled for Monday 27 November 2024, and the first reading of the draft opinion would be in the December plenary. The contractor will deliver the first draft of the opinion before the WG meeting.

### **7. Update on new mandates**

#### **7.1 Request for a scientific opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of peroxyacetic acid (PAA) to reduce microbiological surface contamination on beef carcasses, half carcasses and quarter carcasses (EFSA-Q-2022-00626)<sup>19</sup>**

EFSA staff from BIOHAW Unit informed the Panel that a new request for a scientific opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of peroxyacetic acid (PAA) to reduce microbiological surface contamination on beef carcasses, half carcasses and quarter carcasses was received in EFSA from the European Commission on 17 October 2022. The request is based on the receipt of an application dossier from the Canadian Competent Authorities under Article 3(2) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004. The application was considered valid on 11 September 2023. The WG from the CEP Panel on the evaluation of substances used to reduce microbial contamination from products of animal origin will deal with this request and will meet on 16 October 2023. The BIOHAZ Panel is to endorse the sections related to the Terms of Reference 2 (efficacy) and 3 (potential emergence of reduced susceptibility to biocides and/or resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials) and then the scientific opinion will be proposed for adoption by the CEP Panel. The current deadline to deliver the Scientific Opinion is 11 September 2024.

### **8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels/EFSA/ EC**

<sup>18</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00448?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00448%29+>

<sup>19</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00626?search=EFSA-Q-2022-00626>



### **8.1 Scientific Committee**

The BIOHAZ Panel Chair briefly reported the outcome of the last meeting of the Scientific Committee<sup>20</sup>. In particular, he indicated that the draft guidance for protocol development was adopted (see also item 9.3 below), and reported about the plans to update the guidance on risk benefit assessment.

### **8.2 European Commission**

EFSA staff from BIOHAW Unit briefly reminded the Panel about upcoming requests for scientific advice by EFSA in the remit of the BIOHAZ Panel.

### **8.3 Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities**

This item was postponed to the next Plenary meeting.

## **9. Other topics for information and/or discussion**

### **9.1 Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments**

Maarten Nauta presented to the Panel a summary of the type of uncertainty analysis carried out by the BIOHAZ Panel in the last years. He presented some ideas, developed together with Giuseppe Ru and Kostas Koutsoumanis, for the development of a possible decision tree to give indications on the selection of appropriate methods for uncertainty analysis depending on the type of mandate/terms of reference in the specific BIOHAZ remit. Discussions followed with the Panel and will continue in the next plenary meetings.

### **9.2 Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and preparedness**

EFSA staff from BIOHAW Unit indicated that EFSA is still reflecting on the possible activities aimed at improving future preparedness to food safety incidents, based on the topics highlighted by the BIOHAZ Panel in the past.

### **9.3 Update on EFSA Guidance on protocol development for EFSA's scientific assessments**

The draft guidance document for protocol development was presented for possible adoption at the Scientific Committee meeting on 21-21 September 2023. The guidance was adopted. The template for EFSA's protocols (Annex A) and the report summarising the outcomes of the related public consultation (Annex B) were also endorsed. As a follow-up project, some ideas regarding the 'interactive repository of EFSA protocols' illustrated in the guidance among the recommendations for future development were presented and discussed. It was explained that EFSA has just initiated a project to develop the interactive repository. As a first step, the users' needs will be clarified.

### **9.4 Information on EFSA CARBACAMP project (GP/EFSA/BIOHAW/2023/04)**

EFSA staff from the BIOHAW Unit gave an update in relation to a Monopoly Grant agreement on the CarbaCamp project, recently entered into force. The project aims to comprehensively understand the prevalence, characteristics, and implications of Campylobacter resistance to

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/115th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>



specific carbapenems such as ertapenem, meropenem, and imipenem. Background information was given on the issue of ertapenem resistance in various animal species, on resistant human cases appearing, and on the study's primary objectives. These objectives have been translated into 14 expected deliverables outlined in the Grant Agreement. The studies will employ a multidisciplinary approach, integrating microbiological testing (MIC determination using microdilution on a panel of *Campylobacter* strains derived from various animal species and Disk Diffusion (DD) tests on selected isolates) and genetic analysis (Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) on a subset of isolates to investigate the genetic determinants underlying the observed resistance). Denmark Technical University was selected as the beneficiary of this project. The project is scheduled for a 24-month duration starting from the kick off meeting that was conducted on 22/09/2023.

## **10. Any other business**

EFSA Staff from the BIOHAZ Unit indicated to the Panel that there have been contacts with the organisers of the conference FoodMicro2024 for the possible co-organisation of a scientific session of the conference. More details will follow upon confirmation.